(b) the period for which such contracts are usually given;

(c) the procedure for renewal of such licences;

(d) whether it is a fact that the same contractors managed to renew the licences and are running their business for decades together; and

(e) if so, the steps taken by Government to break their monopoly?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) As per extant policy, all new bookstall contracts are awarded to unemployed graduates, their co-operatives, partnerships, associations and co-operative societies of actual workers and vendors by inviting applications through Press Notifications after following prescribed procedure.

(b) Five years.

(c) to (e) The renewal is done after reviewing the performance of the bookstall licencee. Some of the licences are working for the last many years in view of their satisfactory performance and renewals in due course.

Period for booking railway reservation

3503. SHRI E. BALANANDAN:
SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the extended period for booking reservation in Railways from one month to two months before, has caused serious crisis to get reservations in Railways as this has given enough scope for the touts and racketeers to block the tickets;

(b) whether it is rational to think that the people have to decide two months before their journey;

(c) if not, whether Government are considering to go back to earlier system of '10 days before' reservation in the age of computers;

(d) if so, when; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) No such complaints has been received.

(b) The major problem in getting reservation is during Summer Vacations, Puja Holidays, Winter Vacations etc. the days of which are known to passengers in advance and they can plan their journeys well in advance.

(c) There is no such proposal under consideration.

(d) Does not arise

(e) Any reduction in the period of advance booking will increase and not reduce touting activities.

Complaints from passengers of Rajdhani Express running between Patna and Delhi

3504. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there have been complaints from passengers of Rajdhani trains as reported in 'Indian Express' dated 15th June, 1998 about Rajdhani train running between Patna and Delhi;

(b) if so, the number of such complaints received from passengers of various Rajdhani and Shatabdi trains during the last six months; and

(c) what action has been taken to ensure that passengers of these premier trains are provided all the facilities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) 230 complaints were received from passengers of various Rajdhani/Shatabdi Express trains during the last six months.

(c) Catering services in these trains are being closely monitored and remedial action is taken. The Pantry car contract for New Delhi-Patna Rajdhani Express

has since been terminated due to unsatisfactory performance of the licencee.

Loss of Revenue to Railways due to defects in the Computerised Ticket Booking System

3505. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) how many crores of rupees of revenue Railways have lost because of defects in the computer tickets booking system Installed by keltron, during the last three years;

(b) the loss incurred by the South Central Railways; whether any enquiry has been conducted;

(c) if so, the details thereof and whether any action has been initiated against the persons involved; and

(d) whether Keltron is held responsible partly or fully for the defects in the system?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (c) On getting information that there was some discrepancy in the issue of general tickets through Self Printing Ticket Machines (SPTMs) supplied by M/s. Keltron at Secunderabad station, a joint team of Commercial, Accounts and Vigilance Officers/Inspectors was formed to seize all the records and suspend the working of these machines. Though the manipulation was suspected at Secunderabad station, the machines available at Kacheguda and Hyderabad were also suspended for operation and records seized as the SPTMs of above three stations were supplied by M/s. Keltron Ltd. Preliminary investigations revealed that two booking clerks at Secunderabad station have misappropriated an amount of Rs. 1661/-. They have been suspended and taken up under Discipline & Appeal Rules.

(d) Preliminary investigations have not established the involvement of M/s. Keltron Ltd.

Amount spent by Railways for doubling work in Kerala

3506. SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the amount spent by the Railways for doubling work in Kerala for the last five years;

(b) the amount proposed to be spent in the new budget 1998-99; and

(c) the percentage of the total amount earmarked for doubling in the Budget?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Rs. 173.75 crores.

(b) Rs. 88.64 crores.

(c) 17.38% of the total amount earmarked for doublings in the Budget 1998-99 has been provided for these doubling works in Kerala.

पौंटा और कालाआम (हि०प्र०) के रास्ते देहरादून से चंडीगढ़ तक रेलवे लाइन

3507. श्री मनोहर कान्त ध्यानी: क्या रेल मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या पौंटा व कालाआम (हिमाचल प्रदेश) के रास्ते देहरादून से चंडीगढ़ तक रेलवे लाइन के संबंध में कोई सर्वेक्षण किया गया है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो इस रेलवे लाइन पर कार्य कब तक शुरू किया जाएगा और इसके कब तक पूरा हो जाने की संभावना है; और

(ग) इस परियोजना की अनुमानित लागत कितनी है?

रेल मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री राम नाईक): (क) और (ख) सर्वेक्षण अभी प्रगति पर है तथा 30.6.1999 तक पूरे किए जाने की संभावना है। सर्वेक्षण रिपोर्ट प्राप्त होने पर ही परियोजना पर आगे विचार करना संभव होगा।